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ABSTRACT

To examine local dropout trends the Oklahoma City Public Schools (OCPS) documented the numbers and described the characteristics of those who dropped out in the 1985-86 school year. Local dropout rates were compared to those of other school districts and the nation as a whole. A dropout was defined as any student who is under age 18 and has not graduated from high school and is not attending any public school or otherwise receiving an education pursuant to law for the full term of the school district in which he or she resides. The student who is absent for 20 consecutive days and for whom no other school has requested his records is also considered a dropout. The OCPS recorded a 2 percent dropout rate at the middle schools, a 10.9 percent rate at the high schools and an over-all rate of 6.6 percent. Students most likely to drop out were American Indians or Whites. The most frequent time to leave was in the ninth or tenth grade and the highest numbers left in November or February. Almost identical numbers of males and females dropped out. Slightly over half of the dropouts were from families with a lower socio-economic background. The most frequent reason for leaving was a lack of interest in school. Achievement scores of dropouts indicated a history of below average achievement. (PS)

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"Establishing Excellence"

Dropout Report For the 1985–86 School Year

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DROPOUT REPORT
FOR THE 1985-86 SCHOOL YEAR

The purpose of this report is to examine local dropout trends. The number of students who dropped out of the Oklahoma City Public Schools are documented and their characteristics are described. In addition, local dropout rates are compared to those of other school districts or the nation as a whole.

The State of Oklahoma definition for a dropout includes "any student who is under the age of 18 and has not graduated from high school, and is not attending any public school or is otherwise receiving an education pursuant to law for the full term of the school district in which he (she) resides are in session[1]" (Oklahoma Senate Bill No. 518). If a student is absent from school for 20 consecutive days, and no other school has requested the student's records (indicating enrollment in a new school), the student is recorded as a dropout (Fink, 1986).

There are two generally accepted approaches to calculating dropout rates: the multi-year, longitudinal method and the one-year cross-sectional method. The longitudinal method identifies all students of appropriate age or grade at a specific point in time and follows the cohort for a predetermined number of years. The percent having dropped out at the end of that period is calculated by dividing the number of dropouts into the original number of the cohort. Cross-sectional dropout rates are calculated by dividing the number of students who drop out during the school year

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[1]Students who leave a public school to attend a private school are <u>not</u> considered dropouts.

into the total number of students in the district (grades 6-12). In this study the cross-sectional method was used to compute the dropout rates.

Before looking at the results of the study, it should be noted that the dropout rates undoubtedly contain some degree of error. Analysis of the attendance registers did not always agree with the dropout reports issued from the schools. It is unknown which reports were accurate or whether the errors resulted in higher or lower dropout rates.

How Many Students Dropped Out?

The Oklahoma City Public Schools showed 1131 sixth through twelfth grade students dropping out of school during the 1985-86 school year. This represented a 2.0% dropout rate at middle school, a 10.9% dropout rate at high school, and an overall dropout rate of 6.6%.

To provide a point of comparison, the high school dropout rates of four other large city school systems are presented below (Hammock 1986).

School Year	City	Grades Represented	Dropout Rate
1983-84	Boston	9-12	14.2%
1982-83	New York City	9-12	12.6%
1982-83	San Diego	9-12	4.5%
1984-85	Tulsa	9-12	8.7%
1985-86	Oklahoma City	9-12	10.9%

These cities were chosen because they calculate their dropout rates using the same cross-sectional method as does Oklahoma City.

Within our own district the dropout rates differed among the schools, ranging from 0% at Eisenhower and Hoover to 49% at Emerson Alternative Center. Figures 1-3 illustrate how rates compare among middle schools, among high schools, and among special centers. Appendix A provides the actual dropout rates at each school.

We cannot compare, at this time, the current Oklahoma City Public Schools dropout rate to dropout rates of previous years. Prior to 1985-86, if a student dropped out of school, later returned to school, then dropped out again, he or she was counted as two dropouts. Therefore, the dropout rates of previous years were inflated.

Figure 1

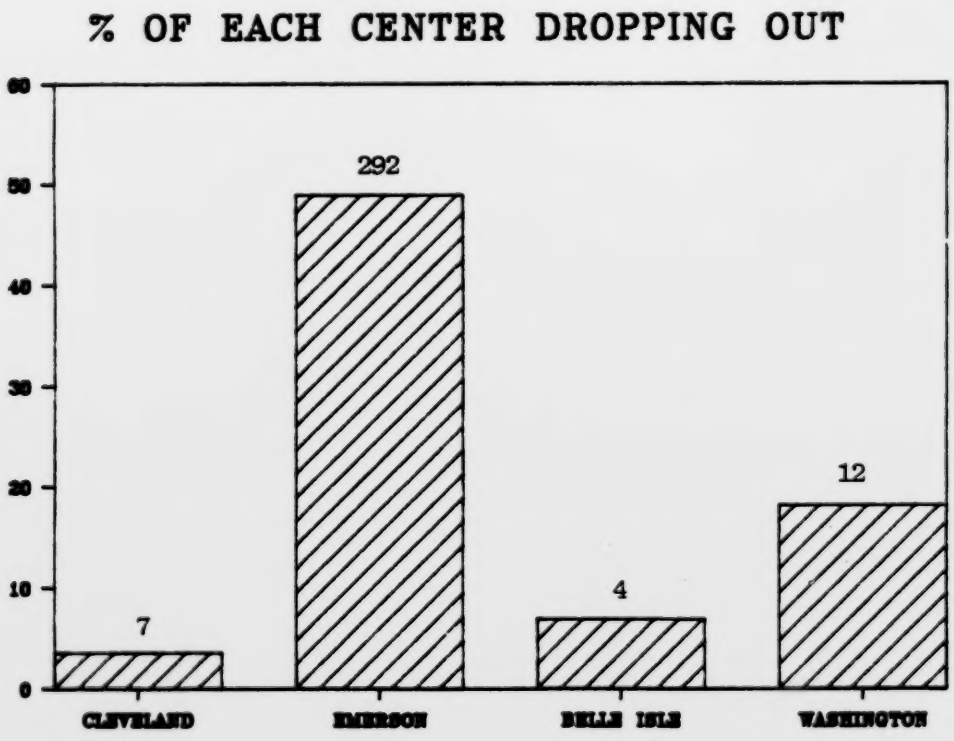
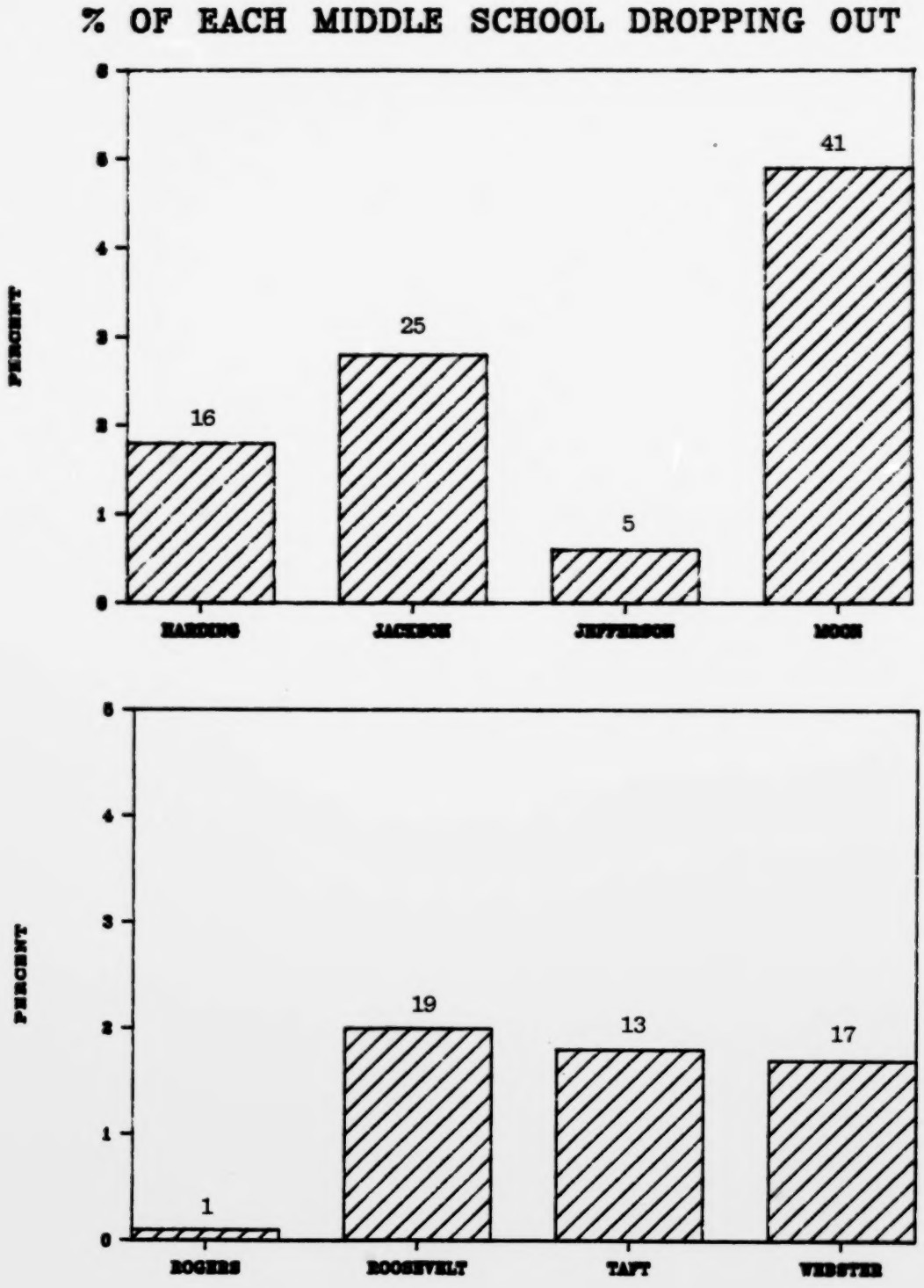


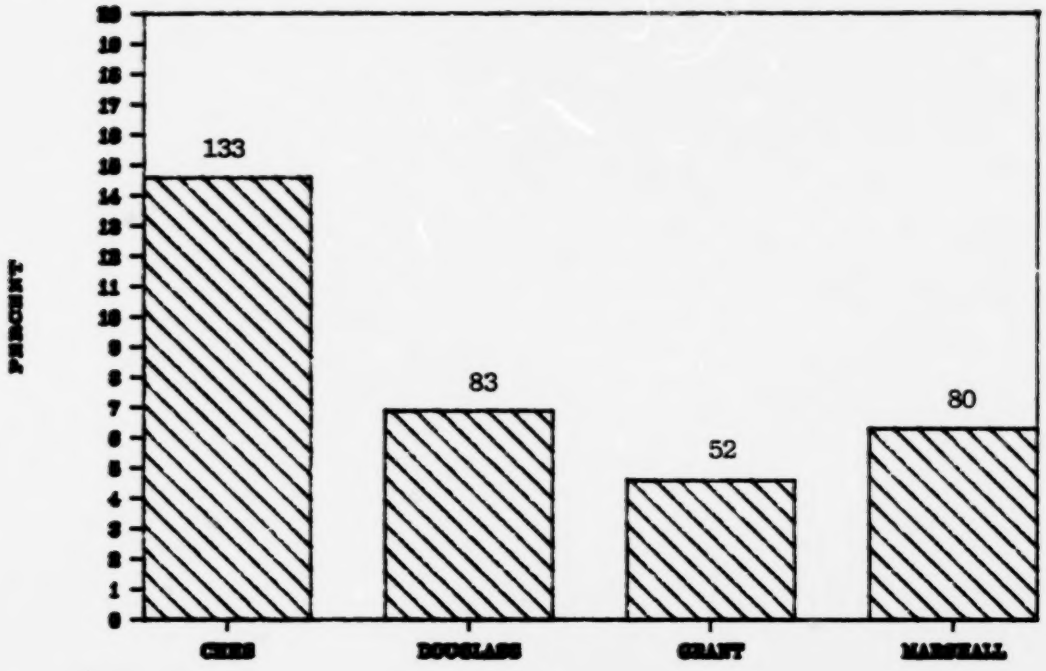
Figure 2

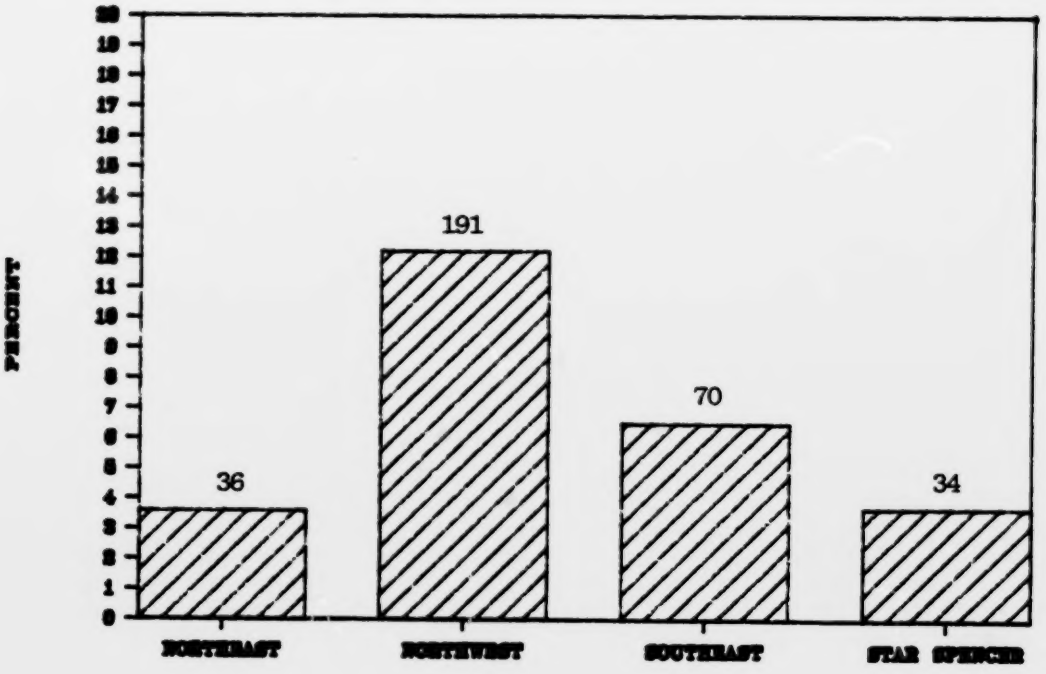


*Eisenhower and Hoover reported no dropouts during 1985-86.

Figure 3

% OF EACH HIGH SCHOOL DROPPING OUT





Who Drops Out of School?

In his national study of dropouts, Ekstrom (1986) found that more males dropped out of school than did females. He also found that, throughout the nation, over 25% of Hispanics, approximately 18% of blacks, and 14% of whites in the nation left school before completion. The Oklahoma City Public School percentages of dropouts by race and sex differ somewhat from the figures cited above. Unlike the nation as a whole, almost identical numbers of males and females drop out in Oklahoma City Public Schools. Figure 4 illustrates the percent of each race dropping out. The percents are calculated by dividing the number of dropouts of each race into the number of enrollees of that race. Again, Oklahoma City Public Schools shows a different pattern from that of the nation. Our highest dropout rates are for Indians and Whites as opposed to the nation's highest for Hispanics and Blacks. The number of each sex and race dropping out by school is found in Appendix B.

Figure 4

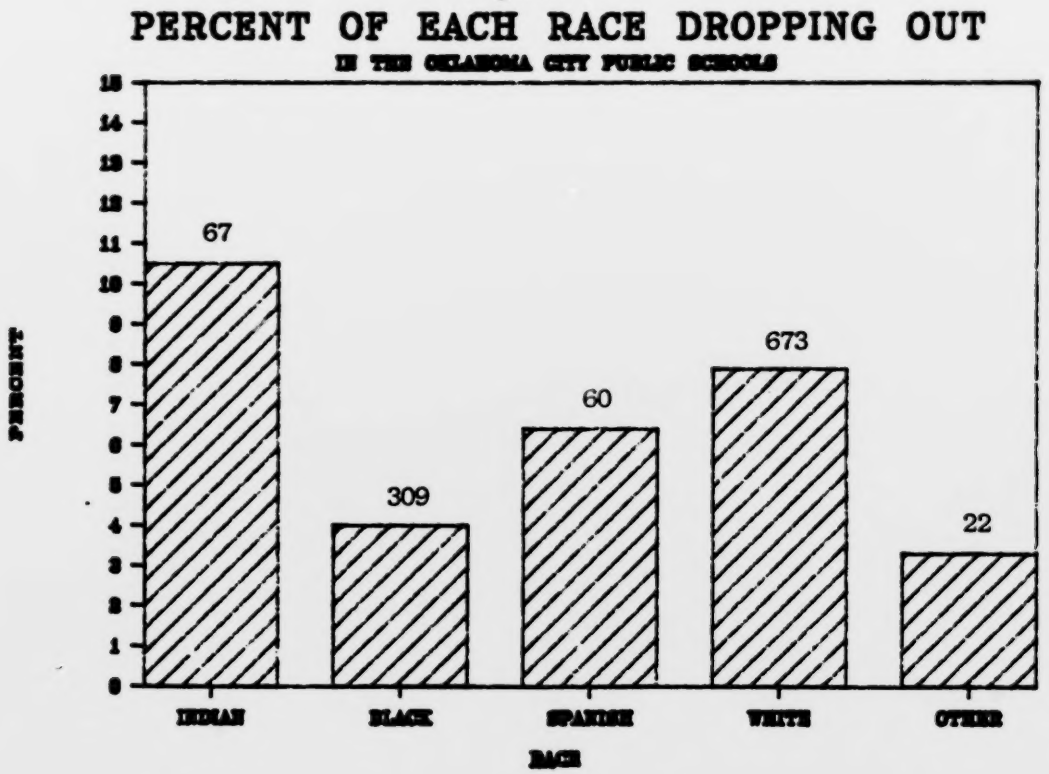
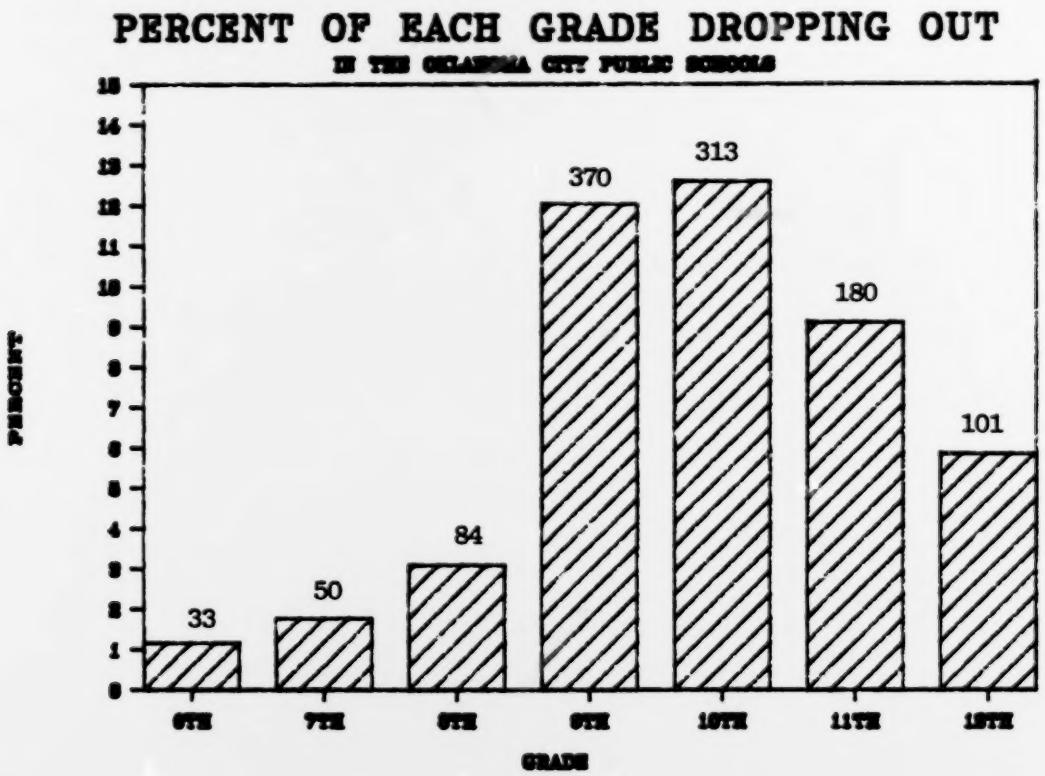


Figure 5 shows the percent of students dropping out at each grade. Typical of the nation as a whole, our students drop out most often in the ninth and tenth grades. Appendix C provides the numbers by grade of the dropouts at each school.

Figure 5



Slightly over half of the dropouts qualified for free or reduced lunch and thus were from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Approximately one-third of the dropouts were at least one year older than the norm for their grade level. Therefore, these students may have been retained at least once during their school careers. This should <u>not</u> necessarily lead to the conclusion that

retention causes higher dropout rates, however. According to Stephenson (1986) the more likely explanation is that low achievement causes both being retained and dropping out.

The number of students who dropped out each month is listed below.

Month	Number
September	21
October	98
November	180
December	143
January	103
February	175
March	145
April	123
May	143
TOTAL	1131

As can be seen, November and February have the highest dropout rates; September and October, the lowest.

Seven percent of the dropouts were special education or former special education students.

The reasons given for students dropping out are listed below.

Reason	Number
Lack of Interest	321
Non-Attendance	8
Marriage	8
Employment	28
Behavior Difficulty	34
Pregnancy	7
Academic Difficulty	38
Needed at Home	6
Entered Armed Forces	1
Physical Illness	8
Economic Reasons	4
Physical Disability	2
Other/Unknown	666
TOTAL	1131

The median percentiles made by dropouts on CAT total reading, total math, and total language from 1981-1985 are shown below; however, not all dropouts attended the Oklahoma City Public Schools from 1981 until they dropped out in 1986 so data are not available for all dropouts. The average percentiles for those student who were attending the Oklahoma City Public Schools during the last five years indicate below average achievement.

Achievement Score History
For the 1985-86 Dropouts

Year	Number of Students With Scores	Total Reading Median Percentile	Total Math Median Percentile	Total Language Median Percentile
1981	489-500	31.0	30.0	27.0
1982	512-525	30.0	29.0	30.0
1983	533-549	31.0	32.0	31.0
1984	498-517	31.0	34.0	31.0
1985	417-448	29.0	30.0	31.0

Conclusions

The dropout rate at the high school level indicated that more than one out of every ten high school students who enrolled in an Oklahoma City high school in September, dropped out before May. The students most likely to dropout were Indians or Whites. The most frequent time to leave was in the ninth or tenth grade, and the highest numbers of students left school in November or February. The reason for leaving was most often a lack of interest in school. The achievement scores of dropouts indicated a history of below average achievment.

References

Ekstrom, R.B. et al, "Who Drops Out of High School and Why: Findings from a National Study" Teacher's College Record, 1986, Vol. 87, No. 3, pps. 256-373.

Hammock, F.M. "Large School System's Dropout Reports: An Analysis of Definitions, Procedures, and Finding" Teacher's College Record 1986, Vol. 87, No. 3, pps. 324-341.

Stephenson, R.S. "A Study of the Longitudinal Dropout Rate: 1980 Eighth Grade Cohort Followed From June, 1980 Through February, 1985" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, 1986.

Fink, J., (ed.), Attendance Accounting System and Other Enrollment Activities, Oklahoma City Public Schools, 1986, pps. 5-6.

Appendix A

Percent of Membership
Dropping Out of School

	School	Membership*	% Dropping Out
Middle:	Eisenhower/Hoover	794	0
	Harding	880	1.8
	Jackson	960	2.8
	Jefferson	902	.6
	Moon	834	4.9
	Rogers	883	.1
	Roosevelt	958	2.0
	Taft	721	1.8
	Webster	992	1.7
High:	Capitol Hill	909	14.6
	Cleveland	192	3.6
	Douglass	1196	6.9
	Grant	1134	4.6
	Marshall	1268	6.3
	Northeast	993	3.6
	Northwest Classen	1562	12.2
	Southeast	1075	6.5
	Star Spencer	931	3.7
Centers:	Emerson	596	49.0
	Belle Isle	58	6.9
	Washington	66	18.2
	TOTAL GRADES 6-12	17,166	6.6

*Membership figures are taken from the March 24, 1986, Membership Report.

APPENDIX B

NUMBER OF DROPOUTS BY RACE AND SEX AT EACH SCHOOL

1985-86

School	Female	Male	Indian	Black	Spanish	White	Other
Harding	7	9	1	6	1	6	2
Jackson	12	13	3	5	4	13	0
Jefferson	1	4	1	1	0	3	0
Moon	21	20	9	10	3	19	0
Rogers	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Roosevelt	11	8	6	0	2	10	1
Taft	7	6	0	2	0	11	0
Webster	6	11	0	1	0	16	0
Capitol Hill	65	68	11	8	9	103	2
Cleveland Innovative	5	2	0	0	0	7	0
Douglass	44	39	3	11	8	60	1
Grant	24	28	2	17	3	29	1
John Marshall	38	42	0	22	2	56	2
Northeast	13	23	1	14	3	6	12
Northwest Classen	103	88	11	45	16	116	3
Southeast	39	31	3	9	2	56	0
Star-Spencer	10	24	0	22	0	12	0
Emerson	153	139	15	131	7	139	0
Belle Isle	2	2	0	0	0	4	0
Washington	2	10	1	4	0	7	0
TOTAL	564	567	67	309	60	673	22

APPENDIX C

NUMBERS OF DROPOUTS BY GRADE AT EACH SCHOOL

1985-86

School	6TH	7TH	8TH	9TH	10TH	11TH	12TH	TOTAL
Harding	5	2	9	0	0	0	0	16
Jackson	9	6	10	0	0	0	0	25
Jefferson	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	5
Moon	9	18	14	0	0	0	0	41
Rogers	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Roosevelt	2	6	11	0	0	0	0	19
Taft	4	4	5	0	0	0	0	13
Webster	3	4	10	0	0	0	0	17
Capitol Hill	0	0	0	58	48	21	6	133
Cleveland Innovative	0	0	0	2	0	3	2	7
Douglass	0	0	0	29	36	15	3	83
Grant	0	0	0	34	10	7	1	52
John Marshall	0	0	0	25	25	17	13	80
Northeast	0	0	0	4	18	4	10	36
Northwest Classen	0	0	0	63	51	47	30	191
Southeast	0	0	0	24	20	16	10	70
Star-Spencer	0	0	0	15	7	6	6	34
Emerson	1	2	15	116	96	42	20	292
Belle Isle	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	4
Washington	0	3	9	0	0	0	0	12
TOTAL	33	50	84	370	313	180	101	1131